

STATE OF ALASKA

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR ANILCA IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

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June 13, 2003

Deb Liggett
Superintendent
Lake Clark National Park and Preserve
4230 University Drive, Suite 311
Anchorage, Alaska 99508

Dear Ms. Liggett:

Attached are comments from the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities concerning the National Park Service Port Alsworth Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) pertaining to the Expansion & Upgrade of Port Alsworth Visitor Contact and Maintenance Facilities. Please accept these as the State of Alaska's comments for your consideration before finalizing or revising the EA. Please call me if you have any questions at 269-7477.

Thank you,

/ss/

Sally Gibert
State ANILCA Coordinator
Office of the Governor

Attachment

NPS Port Alsworth Draft Environmental Assessment

Expansion & Upgrade of Port Alsworth Visitor Contact and Maintenance Facilities

ADOT&PF has no ongoing projects or current facilities at Port Alsworth and the Department has no specific concerns with the scope or overall purpose and need of the proposed expansion and upgrade of the Port Alsworth Visitor Contact and Maintenance Facilities as outlined in the EA.

The following information is offered for possible inclusion in the consolidated response letter to ensure there is an understanding of the Department's future projects at the community.

Improvements recommended in the EA should be undertaken with the understanding that two anticipated ADOT&PF projects could, potentially, have long-term yet to be determined impacts on the Visitor Contact and Maintenance Facilities operations:

1. Port Alsworth Airport Master Plan (AMP) – ADOT&PF recently completed an “information gathering stage” with respect to the possible scheduling of an AMP at Port Alsworth to address the feasibility of constructing a public airport at the community. An evaluation of information provided during this period by Port Alsworth residents and other interested parties indicated that the preponderance of demonstrated public opinion supported completion of the AMP.

Specifically, the Department received resolutions of support from the Lake and Peninsula Borough, Port Alsworth Improvement Corporation (PAIC), Tanalian Inc., the National Park Service (Deborah O. Liggett, Superintendent, Lake Clark National Park & Preserve), and State Representative (now State Senator) Gary Stevens. The Department also received a supporting petition from PAIC containing 37 Port Alsworth resident signatures. Evaluating all correspondence received, the overall support to oppose ratio for completion of the AMP was approximately 78% supporting and 22% opposing. Consequently, a determination was made to schedule the AMP in the Aviation Improvement Program Spending Plan as follows –

- Phase 1 - \$85,000 FFY '04. Purpose will be to determine if feasible alternatives exist for construction of a public airport at Port Alsworth.
- Phase 2 - \$290,000 FFY '05. If valid alternatives exist, the purpose will be to develop the environmental document, airport layout plan and master plan report.

The community is now primarily served by two privately owned airstrips – a dirt/gravel airstrip owned and operated by Glen Alsworth, Sr. and a gravel airstrip owned by Dave Wilder. (It is the Department's understanding that the EA project would entail expansion and upgrade of the visitor contact and maintenance facilities adjacent to Dave Wilder's airstrip.)

Concurrent with the AMP process, one contentious issue that will be addressed is the possibility that the existing Port Alsworth airstrips would have to be permanently closed if a new public airport is built. This will likely entail FAA conducting an updated Airspace Review to reconfirm FAA's position with respect to the need to close the existing airstrips once the public airport is built. It should be noted that the owners of both private airstrips have documented, in writing, that they support completion of the AMP and the eventual construction of a public airport at the

community. The owners of both private airstrips have also acknowledged, in writing, that they anticipate the closing of their respective airstrips upon completion of a public airport.

If a determination is eventually made to construct a public airport at Port Alsworth, completion of the airport's construction could easily be 10+ years from today. The overall sequence of events and approximate timelines is as follows:

- AMP Phase 1 – (1-1.5 years)
- AMP Phase 2 - (1-1.5 years)
- Aviation project scope developed from AMP submitted to the Department's Aviation Project Evaluation Board (APEB) for evaluation. APEB is normally scheduled on a semi-annual basis (.5 years)
- Airport construction commences. Start date will depend on the score the project receives in the competitive APEB evaluation process. (3-5 years)
- Completion of airport construction. (1-2 years)

2. Port Alsworth Landfill Access Road – The Port Alsworth Improvement Corporation (PAIC) nominated to the Department a project to construct an approximate 1.5 mile, 24' wide, gravel road to access the future Port Alsworth Solid Waste Ashfill & Incinerator site. The PAIC preferred location for the ashfill/incinerator site is a 10-acre site in the southeast corner of Section 16, Township 1 North, and Range 29 West, on Tanalian Inc. land, west of the Tanalian River. The project will require construction of an approximate 140' bridge spanning the Tanalian River. The project was submitted to the Department's December 2001 Project Evaluation Board (PEB) and received a relatively low score of 72. The access road and bridge have an estimated cost of \$6,355,000. The road project is currently projected for construction > FFY '09.

It is conceivable the project's score could be enhanced in two ways. (1) If the PAIC and/or Lake and Peninsula Borough were to commit to ownership and/or maintenance responsibility for the road upon its completion. (2) VSW or other agency funding is finalized for construction of the Solid Waste Ashfill & Incinerator site. If either, or both, were to occur the road project's score would likely be increased upon reevaluation by the PEB. The increased score, in turn, would likely accelerate the access road's scheduled completion in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP).

The first segment of the road to the ashfill/incinerator site, to include the bridge spanning the Tanalian River, could eventually serve a significant portion of the airport access road to a new public airport should the airport also be constructed west of the Tanlian River.